

A BLACK CIVILIZATION

754 anything that a man or woman has been eating are carefully picked up and hidden.

754 514 The magicians are believed to take the excrement at times and place it in a fire where there are hot stones which are supposed to make the victim very ill; at other times it is placed between the limbs of two trees, as are the pieces of refuse; the rubbing of the branches causes a sore in the victim's throat.

C. WHITE MAGIC AND THE HEALER

755 White magic is an effective force used to cure sickness, heal wounds, take away the malignant effect of a snake bite, and, in general, to remove from the individual a feeling of dysphoria and to give him a sense of well-being and adjustment to his community.

The white magician usually performs this function and applies this power. He can remove foreign objects which have been shot into the body of the sick man, and diagnose on the principle that the patient can live if the cause of illness is only a foreign object, but must die if his soul is stolen.

756 *Individuality and Social Personality of the White Magician.*—The individuality of the white magician is not different from that of the ordinary man. The only noticeable tendency in all the observed healers was their joviality and pleasantness in their ordinary social relations. There were no indications of the psychopathic personality, for psychologically and physically they were a very normal group.

The social personality of the healer is different from that of the ordinary man's only because of his additional magical powers; otherwise he participates in the culture much the same as anyone else. He marries, has children, hunts, fishes, fights, and enters the ceremonial life in a manner no different from that of other men. There is but one rigid taboo on his behavior: he cannot submerge himself in salt water without losing his power. Evidence is conflicting as to the existence of food taboos. If there are such, they were not observed nor did the magicians admit any. The most successful healers were observed eating the foods which some of the evidence claimed were taboo to them. The reason for the belief in such restrictions seems to be that during their novitiate they undergo certain food privations.

[784] [262] The healer gains his power through extraordinary experiences with two or possibly three soul-children who afterwards become his helpers. Both the medicine man and his familiars are called marngit. He can, in some cases, foretell the future and read a man's mind.

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MURNGIN MAGIC AND MEDICINE.

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the ghost left, Willidjungo went back to sleep and the ghost went up to Munyiryir's and pushed the stick inside him. This was done because the victim had been given a ranga a long time back and had not returned the present to the owner of the totem. 755
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Mahkarolla had been ill for a number of days with a very bad ache in his back which made him bend over to such an extent that he could not walk. He was in extreme pain. A number of years before he had fallen from a tree which had paralyzed his lower limbs for a short time. He sent for Willidjungo to treat him. Willidjungo arrived. He walked around him in a rather stately manner until he had covered a course of about a half circle. He then walked over to his patient, got down on his knees beside him and asked him to lie on his stomach. He washed his hands, took a mouthful of water and washed his mouth out and spat it on the ground. He felt all over the body with his fingers while examining the back carefully. He then rubbed his hand under his own armpit and again applied his hands to Mahkarolla's back. He massaged it carefully. He then removed the spirit bag from his head and rubbed it under each arm and against his head, then applied it to Mahkarolla's head and buttocks. The rubbing continued. Soon it was localized to one spot. The doctor then bent over his patient and put his mouth to the spot, in the lower part of his back. He blew against the place where the illness was supposed to be located, then sucked. He raised his mouth and spat. He spat again. He put his hand to his mouth and brought out a small stick about three inches in length and about the size of a small match in diameter. It looked like a large darning needle. Willidjungo diagnosed the case as due to a wrong that had been done his familiars, who had struck at Mahkarolla. There was probably more to it; but unfortunately this occurred when I first arrived in the field and I did not get all the details. Within two or three hours after this treatment the patient was well and walking around. He claimed that he felt all right. 755

Mahkarolla paid Willidjungo a stick of tobacco and some nut bread for the treatment. There must always be a payment made for a treatment by a magician. 756

Munyiryir, although he had been an excellent doctor and had cured a large number of people, suddenly lost his power because he unintentionally disobeyed the taboo, which, if broken, always destroys a doctor's familiars. This occurred within a few months before my arrival with the Murngin. 756
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"I had been down," he said, "to the ocean. It was on the Goyder River side of Millingimbi Island. Those doctors of mine were sitting on my head and shoulders. I was out in a canoe standing in it when another canoe

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came along and hit our small one. I fell in the ocean and I was covered with the salt water. I heard those opossum children make noises. I put my hand on my head and they fell down inside the water when I came up. A little after that an old man was sick. 'I am sick inside here,' he said. [He touched his chest.] I looked to see what was inside him but I could see nothing now. My eye was too dark. I had lost my doctor children. I can't see anything now inside people. Everyone says that I have lost my very good thing that I had. It's too bad. I said to all the people then, 'I can't look out for you people any more. I fell down in the salt water and it covered me and I can't cure any more.' If I had fallen down in fresh water it would not have hurt those doctor children of mine."

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Diagnosing Snake Bite.—Sometimes it is impossible for a man to determine what has stung or bitten him when he is walking bare-legged through the high grass. The Murngin feel it is always necessary to know what has caused a thing. Magicians are called in to diagnose, of which there are at least two methods. In the southern and more interior clan territories, among such people as the Ritarngo, Djimba, Gunalbingu and Dai, when a man thinks he has been bitten by a snake that has crawled away without his seeing it, he finds a hollow pandanus log. He then takes some blood from the wound, places it on a handful of grass, and sticks the grass in one end of the old pandanus tree. He lights the dry grass, blows on the smoke, and watches to see it come out the other side. The snake spirit comes out of the hole. If it looks around for food the man who is bitten will die. If it hurries away he is certain to live. By the other method of diagnosing a snake bite the magician rubs the injured part with one hand while with the other he holds a long thin grass stalk. The grass stalk is moved around the ground with great delicacy and is raised and lowered a number of times. In time some little particle of earth, a grass seed or a bit of bark, will adhere to the end of the stick. If it is only a grass seed or some tiny minute particle the magician diagnoses the bite as that of a small snake. If it is large, the snake is a large one. This diagnosis is also supposed to cure the injury.

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Rain Magic.—It is not necessary to be a magician in order to make rain. Anyone can do it, providing he follows the correct procedure. No one would attempt to make rain during the dry season, since this is an improper time for it and nobody wants it then. However, if the dry season continues too long a number of people, usually ceremonial leaders of the various clans, attempt to end it. To make rain, a man gathers a large bundle of green grass and fashions a human image of

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796 leader felt that all the clans had been endangered by this profaneness and
626 that they might all become ill.
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753 At other times the lack of participation in sexual intercourse will
786 cause sickness to the man who fails and possibly to others in a group.
626 Sometimes young and bashful men refuse to enter into the ritualistic
sexual intercourse which ends the Gunabibi. It is believed that they
will be sick. In his account of his first participation in the Gunabibi
old Doring said the following about his embarrassment: "My brother
[distant] said to me at this time, 'You go play with my wife.' I said,
'No.' He said, 'You will be sick and maybe die if you don't play with
her.'" Often the women who are to be the sexual partners of young
men send word to the men that they must come and stay with them
or that the young man's refusal will cause both partners to be ill.

753 Sometimes improper participation in a ceremony will also cause
626 illness. Willidjungo, the medicine man, diagnosed my lame leg as
caused by my not seeing all of a certain Gunabibi ceremony, which
had caused the great snake to be sorry and angry with me. This
diagnosis occurred in similar cases with several of the natives.

Mistreatment of ceremonial objects connected with the celebration
of a great ritual can also cause illnesses. During the Gunabibi some
of the feather headpieces of the leader, Ilkara, disappeared and from
the indications left it appeared that a wildcat had eaten them. The
young men supposed to guard these things and remain on the cer-
emonial ground during the night had failed in their duty. Ilkara
became ill and had to have a doctor remove a large bone from his
side which appeared because of this neglect of his totemic para-
phernalia.

826 Baldness is a term of reproach among the Murngin. A man who
626 becomes bald considers it a calamity. One man among the group was
partially bald. His people believed that his condition was due to his
making too many totemic emblems and giving them to other men
in return for presents; in other words, he was mistreating his totem.
There was no evidence that he traded his totemic emblems any more
frequently than did any of the other men of the group.

753 Women sometimes suffer innocently from the power of the cere-
826 monial blood smeared on the men during the Djungguan and Gunabibi
626 ceremonies. Dundir's leg had two small infections about the size of a
thumb nail. Her husband said that she could not go hunting for grubs
because she was ill. "She picked cotton off me over at Rabuma when

A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF MAGIC 235

we circumcised those young men. That blood made her sick." One old man spoke up and said, "That blood made her sick. It makes women ill when they touch us after the Djungguan. It is the spirit in that blood that does this. It is the totem, not the wooden emblem, but the spirit inside with the power name. He is in that blood. A woman cannot touch it or it will make her sick." 753 826 784

Smaller rituals are performed by two or three individuals to cure someone who is ailing. Frequently women rub red ocher over their bodies because of an ailment, this being but an abbreviation of its use in the larger ceremonies. Red ocher string is tied around the head or body to cure a headache or abdominal pain. This act, too, is but a shortening of the ritual in which decorated string is placed around the head or body in the larger ceremonies. 755

Larger rituals are definitely used to remove pain. Certain parts of the Djungguan are designed to take away the pain from the boy who is being circumcised. The women relatives whip themselves in order to transfer the pain from the boy to themselves. The head of the boy's penis, they also say, is a turtle's head, so the cutting of the foreskin cannot hurt him since it is not his flesh being cut but that of the animal. These statements are also supposed to remove the pain from the boy. 785 826 831

Other rituals, which assure success in war, are demonstrably only elaborated magical practices. The gaingar spears represent the head of the Dua and Yiritja moieties. The souls of the dead of the moieties are supposed to be in each weapon. The ceremonial throwing of the spears to assure the killing of an enemy and to prevent the killing of their own men is definitely of a magical nature, the power of these ceremonies depending upon the souls' clustering around the spear just as the power of the magical killing stick depends upon the souls which cluster about its point. 778 789 775

The bone magic ceremony used in the maringo fighting (see Chapter VI, Warfare) is also an elaborate ceremony focused upon the magical idea of the soul's being associated with a bone relic. In earlier parts of this chapter the individual treats the bone in a ceremonial way to practice his magic against his enemies. Both the gaingar and the maringo ceremony from one point of view are elaborate magical practices participated in by the group and led by the ceremonial or war leader.

All the rituals, particularly the Narra, which celebrates the ascendency of the clan totem, are commonly used to purify the group of 751 783

MURNGIN TOTEMISM

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and acts generally in imitation of this bird. When he reaches the boys, ⁸⁵² he bows at their feet. The leader walks along beside him beating his ⁵³⁵ singing sticks and singing the taboo names of this little bird. Two men dance a grotesque step which makes them appear deformed. They are mokoi trickster spirits.

Two "wallabys" now arrive, hopping along on their hands and feet and imitating other actions of the wallaby. Following them a large gray kangaroo (kai-tjim-bal) and a black-faced kangaroo appear. The last falls down and sleeps; he is considered a very sleepy creature by the natives.

A group of dogs come out crawling on their bellies. They howl like dingoes.

The dance of the mopoke owl and the bush rat is next. The rat crawls in on his hands and knees. The owl, squatting on his haunches, follows after, carrying leaves in each hand. He pounces upon the rat, but the leader kicks him over. This is repeated a number of times, and causes much laughter among the onlookers.

Brush turkeys next appear, and fires are lit all along the dance ground and back in the bush as when the natives try to smoke out these birds in hunting them.

The Dua honeybee dance follows. Two parallel lines of men about six feet apart start at the direction of the leader about one hundred and fifty yards back in the bush. They dance in a rapid rhythm, the members of each line crossing over and taking the place of the other group. When they reach the dance ground they all lie flat on their backs in a long line with the head of one dancer lying between the legs of the one ahead of him.

The stone kangaroos dance again, as well as the big gray kangaroo ⁸⁵² and the wallabys. This finishes for the moment the initiation of the ⁵⁶¹ young boys. They are led away toward the women's camp and left in a convenient clump of bushes between the men's camp and the women's while the initiation of another age group into a higher grade in the men's association takes place. The young men, who are to see the totemic emblem for the first time, run away from the dance ground because they are to be put on a vegetable diet (see Section ²⁶² H, 3) and suffer the taboo of silence for a period of time. The older ⁷⁸⁴ men run after them and bring them back.

4. Meanwhile, at the tail of the snake dance ground, Yurlunggur is ⁸⁵² in the "python well" of the Liaalaomir people. He can be heard roaring in a very slow rhythm. The young men stand with their heads

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796 they did in the first ceremony. They walk with spears in their hands,
535 which, at the moment, symbolizes the yam sticks of the two Djungkao sisters. They continue until they come to the ring of women, as described in the duni or red-ocher part of the ceremony. The kingfishers also represent the modern Murngin man looking for food and sexual intercourse. In a way, too, they are Wongar yolno. After the kingfishers have performed a dance around the women they thrust the short spears among the group to symbolize the Wongar yolno's original breaking of taboo against sexual relations with women of one's own group; then they return to the men's ceremonial ground.

G. THE BRUSH TURKEY TOTEM IS DANCED AND DISPLAYED

1. The totem emblem of a turkey is danced in the Narra ground.
2. The initiates are shown the totem.

[302] 1. Some distance back from the men's dance ground, groups of men have been painting themselves like turkeys. They represent the brush turkey totem. Fires are built all around the men just as fires are built on the plains when turkeys are hunted. The turkeys dance through the fires while an old man beats the singing sticks and leads them toward the men's dance ground. They carry the totem. One man dances a pantomime of a brush turkey out in the plains.

796 2. Small boys are put at the head of the dance ground and are
561 shown the various lower age-grade types of totems by the old men
(see list of totems, pages 39-51). They cannot see the ones that belong
784 to higher age grades. After they have looked upon the totems which
852 have been strongly taboo to them until this time, they must eat only bush food until after they are painted and have made presents to the leader. Looking at the totem serves as an initiation rite. After the boys have seen the totems, all the men dance once more to the main camp, where again the kingfisher ceremony is gone through with the women under their ainmaras.

796 *Native Interpretation.*—"When the turkeys come in, that means by
113 and by the Yiritja are coming up. Those fires are built all around. This is all the same as making a fire in the plain by those Wongar men. When Wongar men built the fires those Wongar turkeys came up too and looked."

796 H. THE MEN AND WOMEN BATHE CEREMONIALLY

1. All the men, women, and children enter the sea and wash themselves.
1. When this is completed the women and children all run into

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230/ *Fish-vertebrae Necklace.*—The vertebrae of the larger fish, including
 237 sharks, are cleaned, bored, covered with red ocher, and strung on a strand
 of fiber string which is tied tightly around the neck. These necklaces are
 worn by all members of the tribe on any occasion.

291 *Human-hair Belts.*—The Murngin wear a belt or band made of human
 hair which fits tightly across the upper portion of the buttocks and around
 the sides as far as the hip bones, where strings are attached and tied in
 front of the pubic hair. There are two types, a bundle or cylindrical one,
 and a flat or sewn variety. One continuous human hair string about fifty
 to sixty feet long is looped back and forth and the end of the bunch of
 loops wrapped for one-half inch with fiber string or human hair. The belt
 has a norm of about twenty-two inches, which varies from twelve to
 twenty-four inches. It has about fifty-five strands in it, but varies from
 twenty-four to sixty-five. Frequently the opossum pubic covering is attached
 to this belt, although usually it is worn by itself. A single small loop may be
 left at each end to which the fiber string for tying is attached.

The flat type of belt is made with one continuous string looped about
 thirty times. Vegetable fiber or human hair string is tied about each end
 of the bundle, which is flattened by stitching with bands of fiber string at
 about three-inch intervals. This allows the belt to fit snugly against the but-
 tocks of the wearer and across the small of the back.

292 Ceremonial human hair belts are made by wrapping red parrot feathers
 over each of the strands in the belt to form a solid layer of red. The wrap-
 [765] ping material is pandanus leaf. These belts are always made from the hair
 of dead persons, which limits the size of the belt. The strands varied, in the
 [784] few examined, from six to twelve in number. This belt is only worn on
 ceremonial occasions and no woman may see it, even though it is made
 from the hair of either men or women.

291 *Pubic Aprons.*—The pubic apron, usually of opossum fur string, is less
 301 an item of clothing than an article of adornment. Although it is an expres-
 sion of the people's modesty, it is classed with necklaces and bracelets
 rather than as a covering for the genitalia. It is composed of a basal strand
 and a fringe. The basal strand is usually of fiber string, but occasionally
 human hair is used. The fringe is made of one continuous strand of opos-
 sum fur looped about the basal cord. Each loop is twisted into a two-ply
 tassel, which is about ten inches long for men and five to six inches for
 women. The ends of the basal strand are tied in a large knot to keep the
 loops from slipping off. The apron is attached to a belt.

295 *Baskets.*—Since all baskets are carrying baskets equipped with carrying-
 strings, they also have been placed in the category of things worn.

All basketry in this district is made by the twining technique. The inner
 layer of the pandanus leaf and water-lily fiber are the two materials used.
 The latter is found only in the open-work type of basket, while the former
 is generally used for the tightly woven mesh, and occasionally also for the

 THE ABORIGINES OF EAST ARNHAM LAND

Kumandjan woman's children will always belong to the Bulain sub-section, and this order obtains right through the intermarriage of the eight sub-sections of the tribe.

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All the members of each sub-section, both male and female, possess a definite relationship to some particular bird or animal, which constitutes their class totem or "jungoin." This form of totemism is but poorly developed, and any mature person, after passing through a brief ceremony, may freely kill and eat his or her totem animal. (See page 16.)

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In this area the distinctive feature of the tribal organisation is the emphasis placed on the local hordes or clans, which are of great number, and in some cases contain but few individuals. Each horde consists of men of one moiety only, with their wives of the opposite moiety, and each horde possesses a definitely defined territory, which in every case includes a ceremonial totemic centre. This ceremonial totemism is, in contrast to the class totemism, very highly developed, and is of the utmost significance and importance.

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These ceremonial totems, which are very numerous, in the vast majority of cases consist of—

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- (a) Representations of utensils and implements believed to have been originated, used and conferred upon the people by certain mythological ancestors.
 - (b) Representations of natural species associated in legend with these ancestors.
 - (c) Representations of these mythological ancestors themselves.
- All of these are highly conventionalised in design.

These "Muraian," as they are called, lie at the basis of most of the ceremonial life of the people. They are most jealously guarded, and are believed to exercise a profound influence on the fortunes of the clan. The revelation of and the explanation of these "Muraian" constitute one of the most important stages in the education of the young men.

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During the "Nara" ceremonies, which are associated with these "Muraian," the initiates have impressed upon them the ancient tribal regulations and sanctions. They are warned against being insolent to their elders, against dishonesty, against lying, against improper relations with women, and so are enforced many excellent ethical lessons. During their period of instruction they are placed under a food tabu, and are informed that any breach of the regulations taught will result in illness or deformity.

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Significance of the Djanggawul

Long before the actual rituals commence, men go out to the sacred ground to prepare the objects. The wooden poles and posts are removed from their hiding places in the water or mud, and weeks are spent in re-painting them. Women are asked to prepare long feathered strings, which are never directly given to the men, but always 'stolen' by them. This is conventional behaviour, and relates to the Djanggawul Brother and his companions' stealing the sacred *runnga*, bags and so on from the 'Two Sisters in the beginning (see Chapter 2). The preliminary preparations take weeks, and are accompanied by singing and invocations. Neophytes are brought in from time to time, and their chests painted with sacred clan designs: they continue to wear these when they return to the camp, and never wash or rub them off, but allow them to fade naturally. In this way the neophytes contract many ritual obligations, since they must recompense their 'initiators'—that is, those who are revealing the mysteries to them. They must also observe a number of tabus relating to their general behaviour, and to the partaking of food.¹ Later, the same neophytes are shown the *runnga* emblems and their designs, and the meanings are explained to them. [302]

By this time, the neophytes have reached the stage when they are regarded as being eligible to witness the first ceremonies. The sacred ground has been prepared, the shade erected and the objects completed. A sacred aura is now said to pervade the ritual ground, and the spiritual presence of the Djanggawul is assured. [584]

The ceremonies which now begin are not seen completely by those neophytes who are brought to the ground for the first time. Years may pass before the complete series has been revealed to them, and it is not as a rule until they have reached middle age that they may take an active part in the ritual. Sometimes, however, younger men who show particular aptitude for religious discussion, dancing and singing, are accepted much earlier. There is always a need for young and energetic dancers and actors; and the older men, by allowing the younger men a degree of active participation, cement their adherence to the cult and so reinforce their own position. But even when younger men dance or act, older men are the organizers, and it is their duty to show the way to the other. They, the older men, are always acknowledged to possess greater knowledge of these matters, to be in a position to impart that knowledge. The older men, when they do dance or act, are almost invariably more proficient than the younger men; and although there is a tendency to-day to allow the younger men a greater measure of participation, it still takes years before a neophyte may be legitimately classified as an initiate. [796, 794, 561]

¹ The economic aspect of the *more* rituals cannot, unfortunately, be dealt with here.

431 Payments or gifts such as those made by a young man under these conditions are known as *tudoit*, (*ta*, mouth, *doit*, signifying return, turn around, turn back), and they occur on many occasions apart from initiation, in each of which, however, the obligations are similar.

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● Mourning and funeral rites among these people are extremely prolonged and are surrounded by many tabus and intricate patterns of obligatory conduct. The group which handles the bones of the dead, which may be carried for some years after they are removed from the ground soon after the initial burial, are called *kon wukundi*, lit. "hands tabu", and these people are placed temporarily outside the normal social life of their hordes. Members of such groups, which stand in a special relation to society, [182] remain in the camp, but they live apart, and this is stressed [252] by the fact that they maintain separate fires at which they cook their own food, apart. But the tabu is not absolute and others within the camp will occasionally take something, such as a firebrand to start another fire, from this *wukundi* (tabu) place. If this should occur the people who [431] take the fire will send back a small present of food in return. This again is called *tudoit* (*vide infra*). If they should omit to make this present they are in danger, after having eaten food cooked at the *wukundi* fire, because they have shared in the solidarity of a group, members of which are linked by the bond of their special relationship with the deceased and so are set apart temporarily from the normal social life of the horde.

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The bones of the dead are handled at intervals during the prolonged mortuary rites, and each time this occurs, the small group on whom falls the obligation of doing it, makes presentations called *kon doit* and *ta doit*. The

182 least equal, or if possible greater value, in order to maintain
 431 his social status and to enhance his prestige. He achieves
 461 this by his capacity to reciprocate a gift quickly and gener-
 554 ously. If he failed to meet the obligations imposed, for
 626 example by the kinship pattern, he would lose face, prestige,
 in his group. It will be evident that this feeling of shame and
 humiliation at failure to reciprocate a gift or to honour an
 obligation, apart altogether from any danger of incurring
 resentment and visitation by evil magic, furnishes one of the
 most powerful mechanisms which underlie the production
 of food and goods, and the circulation of these. This is
 well shown by an example given to me by my informants,
 which illustrates the use which can be made of this fact
 262 to gain a desired objective. While a boy is still regarded as
 562 a child, there is no tabu even for his sisters upon eating the
 784 food that he may capture. But immediately after the circum-
 cision ceremony, when his social status is altered and he
 lives apart from his mother and father in the single men's
 camp, the food collected or killed by a boy becomes tabu
 to relations of certain orders, and is now known by a
 special name, *kālñboi* (vide page 21).

262 The eating of all *kālñboi* food is surrounded by tabus,
 431 even for those relatives who are permitted to partake of it at
 784 all. For "outside" or "distant" relatives under the kinship sys-
 606 tem to eat this *kālñboi* food is a special privilege, but the
 584 obligation to make ceremonial return payments, again of
 the type called *tadoit*, is always present. *Kālñboi* food may
 sometimes be used to ingratiate a young man with a woman
 who stands in the relationship of potential mother-in-law
 (*mukul rumaro*) to him, but whose daughter has already
 been promised (*wawun*) to another man some distance
 away. At first the *mukul rumaro* may refuse the *kālñboi*
 food, but under coercion she may at length accept it, and

if she does so, is regarded as having compromised herself 262
 into giving her daughter to the youth whose *kälñboi* food 431
 she has eaten, although she knows that a fight must follow 784
 when the man to whom the girl rightfully belongs learns 584
 what has happened. Having accepted the *kälñboi* food the 606
 woman also makes a ceremonial presentation of food which
 she gives to her *korron* (son-in-law), who however does not
 eat it himself but distributes it to certain other relatives,
 defined by custom.

This example will show the strength of the urge to recip- 182
 rocate, to discharge an obligation, and the extent to which 183
 it dominates the behaviour of these people, as well as its 431
 importance as a driving force in social and in economic 461
 activities, in which it furnishes one of the most important
 incentives to work.

to, or association with, a totemic ancestor or a clan totem. 435

In the second category fall all things ordinary, non-sacred, 778
called *wūkkinjū*, which in its literal translation means
rubbishy, uncouth, outlandish, but is used also to denote
merely the category of the non-sacred or "profane" in con-
trast with *yarkomirri*.

The first category, which comprises objects called *mārdai*. 778
inboi or *yarkomirri*, includes such things as the fine cere- [431]
monial armlets made from material which has been re-
moved from the actual totem after the *narra* ceremony, and
sent as gifts to friends in other clans. In addition, it includes
all weapons and implements, such as canoe-paddles, certain
spears, baskets of special type, and smoking pipes which
carry the *mintji*, the special totemic patterns of the clan, to
one of the totems of which they have been dedicated. This 778
dedication may take the form merely of the giving of the [552]
sacred name, after which the object becomes *yarkomirri*, 784 ●
or it may constitute a more elaborate ceremony in which 431
the *dālķārramirri*—the "caller of big names"—in his capa-
city of high priest, calls ceremonially over the object, the
sacred *dārrpūl* (hidden) names of the appropriate totem,
thereby consecrating it. Thenceforth it becomes sacred. It
is "*yarkomirri*". If it is a spear, game killed with it becomes
duyū (tabu), if a canoe paddle, all food taken from the
canoe propelled by the paddle is also tabu. Its chief attribute
is that it possesses *marr*, spiritual power derived from the
totem or totemic ancestor whose name it bears. Its use is
prohibited to all but fully initiated men of the particular
clan (or associated group of clans) from which it came,
and in the case of the special, sacred *mintji* or painted de-
signs, may not even be looked upon by profane eyes. To 431
possess these objects carries prestige, and their *marr* imparts [554]
power and strength as well as *tjāmbuit*—hunting prowess, 777
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431 "good luck" in hunting. They make the hunter *mel kārku-*
 [777] *luk*, far seeing, (lit. eye-clear). Such objects are given regu-
 778 larly to friends and to members of other clans, particularly
 [604] to people who stand in the relationship of *wākku* (son,
 woman speaking: sister's son, man speaking) but although
 they carry the obligation to make heavy ceremonial presen-
 tations in return, any idea of straight-out exchange—in the
 sense of economic equivalence, of barter or trade, in con-
 nection with things that are *yarkomirri*, is unthinkable.

- 784 Under certain circumstances, and after a lapse of time, a
 778 rite may be performed to remove the tabu from these ob-
 jects, particularly from canoe paddles, to enable the women
 and children to be fed on the fish or turtle secured from
 the canoe, after which they become *wākkinu*, "ordinary"
 or non-sacred, and lose their *marr*, their "power" (to the
 initiated) and their "danger" (to the profane).

422 Objects of the *wākkinu* type come under no such restric-
 435 tions. In the category of the non-sacred are all a
 [771] man's ordinary possessions, his spears and other weapons,
 canoe, fishing lines, nets, harpoons and all his personal
 equipment, and for a woman, her yam stick, domestic im-
 plements and utensils, her baskets—and in fact all her posses-
 [562] sions. For no woman may possess or use any object which is
yarkomirri.

000 In the foregoing account some of the incentives which
 lie behind the gathering of food and the manufacture of
 weapons and material objects have been described. A num-
 ber of questions now arise. Does a man make all his own
 weapons and the implements which he requires for his own
 use, or does he acquire weapons from other people and in
 turn make them for others? If so, how are these exchanges
 made and on what terms; how are values assessed, payments
 made? Is the matter one of straight-out barter, the balancing

616 "*Dual division*" or "*dual organisation*", cuts right through the social organisation of Arnhem Land (as in many other parts of Australia and elsewhere), dividing it into two halves or "*moieties*", so that half the clans, with their totems, fall into one moiety and half into the other moiety.

In Arnhem Land the moieties are called *dua* and *yiritja*, but they are not always actually named and the *dual division* may be present and may function without the moieties bearing names. Often the natives believe that they can detect physical differences between the members of the two moieties. Sometimes they assert that the people of one moiety have curly hair and those of the other straight, or that there are differences in eye or skin colour. There is often a marked "*opposition*" between moieties to which formal expression is given on ceremonial occasions. This formal or "*organised*" opposition finds expression, and is often stressed, in the mythology, and especially in totemism, the whole of the totemic organisation being divided between the two moieties.

784 *Euphoria*. A state of social well-being brought about by the correct observance of ritual behaviour, especially of *tabus*, in contrast with *disphoria*, a "ritual state of sin" or "bad luck" due to the breaking of *tabus*. Generally a formal rite of expiation or "purification" of a type laid down by tradition, must be carried out by the individual or by the group to restore a state of *euphoria*.

582 *Exogamy* is simply the rule of "marrying out" as opposed to *endogamy*—marriage within the group. In Arnhem Land society the family, clan and moiety are all strictly exogamous and each of these groups is comprised of people with whom marriage is not only not permitted, but to whom, under the kinship system, the pattern of behaviour is incompatible with that towards a wife or husband.

592 *Family*. This is the fundamental unit in social life. In Australia it is the group consisting of a man and his wife or wives, (for these people are *polygynous*), with their young children, own or adopted. Each family lives as a separate, and to a large extent independent, unit, within the camp of the horde. It makes its own fire around which its domestic life is centred and at which it prepares its own food. Around the fireside the food is eaten and here the family sleeps and lives its own separate life.

621 *Horde*, is the name given to the group which at any time actually occupies a clan territory. It is the important functional group and is generally the war-making and law-making group and is an independent social and political unity, but its membership may change, and it lacks the permanence and stability of the clan, the group which a man enters by birth alone.

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cannibalism which they regarded as indispensable to a hunter in order to maintain his prowess at a level that could earn for him the coveted title of *tjambait*.

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During much of the time—amounting to several years—that I lived in Arnhem Land I hunted with groups of the status of horde, which often claimed one or more *marrngitmirri*. I frequently saw these men practising their cult, and was able to make a detailed study of both *marrngitmirri* and *kalka* while I lived a nomadic life with these people.

Kalka and Marrngit

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The cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka*—*kalk'* of the Burara—, to which I have referred, is believed to be used to bring about the death of a man who has been made a scapegoat—frequently by a rite of augury—for the death of a member of an enemy horde. Often the victim will be a man against whom the deceased or his group have harboured a grievance of long standing, perhaps because he has failed to honour some payment such as that obligatory to one who has been present at a *ngarra*—or clan totem—ceremony, to make a ceremonial presentation of *ngata*, food (really vegetable food), or of *gerri*, goods, valuables, to the elders of this clan. Of this obligation they say 'to pay back that *marri*'—to propitiate the *malli* of the culture hero whose totem is involved. This *ngata* and the *gerri* presented by men who have attended the *ngarra* by invitation, are dedicated to the *wangarr* and are said to be *yarkomirri*, i.e. sacramental. Failure to discharge the obligation to make expiatory payments of the kind that I have mentioned places a man in danger of death by magic, even after a long period of time.

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In Arnhem Land the belief is held that the death of any person in full possession of his social personality is due, not to what the white man terms 'natural causes' but to the act of an enemy, often a person who is believed to bear a grudge, real or imaginary, against the deceased. Even death from sickness or drowning, from attack by shark or crocodile, and especially from snake bite, is not regarded as the primary cause, but merely the agent used by an enemy, or by a *ragalk* whose aid he has enlisted, to bring this about. The only exception to the belief about natural death is extreme old age, when, in the words of one of my informants, the people say 'time belong him now'—his time is spent, he has lived his life. Certain types of swellings and deformities are believed to result from ritual visitation or punishment by the *wangarr*, the totemic ancestors, for the violation, even accidental or inadvertent, of a tabu, particularly on the eating of foods which are prohibited at certain critical stages in a man or woman's relation to his family or horde, as at initiation, on the death of near kin, or during pregnancy. Boils of a type distinguished as *marlung* are believed to be due to ritual punishment and so held as proof of the violation of a tabu, usually on the eating of food that is *duyn* (tabu) at critical stages in a man's life.

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A man in east Arnhem Land named Nyarrang pointed to a large tumour on his neck and told me that it was due to the *malli birlma*—i.e. a blow from the 'shade' or spirit of an implement called *birlma*—used today as a mallet or hammer in food-preparation by women, and 'found'

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[224] on the eyes, cheeks and arm of a hunter to make him alert
 [789] and far-seeing—*mel harkuluk*—and so to aid him in

[554] sighting and approaching game that is difficult to kill,
 success with which brings prestige to a hunter. The blood
 [778] drawn by a *regalk* from his victim, or the flesh taken from
 the body of a man whose death has been brought about by

a sorcerer, has special potency in magic. It is regarded as
 dangerous, *drya*—*tabu* in a ritual sense by virtue of its
marr—*marr dal* (*marr*, spiritual power, *dal*, strong). It must
 therefore be eaten only with due observance of ritual pre-
 cautions. In the case of a young man or uninitiated boy,
 human flesh, particularly flesh from the victim of a *kalka*,
 may be given to him only by an old man who first applies
 [789] his own axillary sweat to the mouth, face and throat of
 [784] the novice so that he will not become sick, and thus ensures
 that he receives the benefit of the *marr* without the danger
 that he would otherwise incur. On no account may a boy
 or a young man touch this flesh or blood with his own
 hands.

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Meanwhile the victim of the *kalka* lies unconscious and
 is declared by the natives to be dead. They say that his
malli—his ghost—remains with the body, but that his
birimbir departs. The *birimbir* is very near to our idea of
 the soul. It resides originally with the *malli rangs*, the
 spirit or spirit-manifestation of the totem which remains
 always in the *wangarr kapu manotji*, the totemic well or
 water hole where it swam until it entered the mother's
 body at conception. When the *birimbir* leaves the body of
 the victim of the *kalka*, my informants said that it re-
 turned to the *kapu manotji*. And they added: 'All same he
 die.' It is as if the man has died. For when a man dies his
birimbir returns as described above, to the *kapu manotji* from
 which it came and swims there until it is again reincarnated.

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The *kalka* now proceeds to restore his victim to life.
 He takes a white stone from his dilly bag. First he rubs on
 the body the mucilage of an orchid called *djalkurk*, *Dendro-*
bium dicuphum, and then warms the stone, which he places
 on the sore—*tji'tji*—or on the victim's chest. He warms
 the stone again and now places it on the *maiyang* (throat)
 and chest. Then he draws the skin back into place, heats
 the stone again and places it on his victim's cheeks, supple-
 menting the stone with the blade of his *mangal*—spear-
 thrower. My informants said that the penis of the victim
 is erect, the tongue hanging out and the bowel prolapsed,
 and each of these organs has to be treated and replaced in
 position. Sometimes one of the *kalka* will climb a nearby
 tree and break down the leafy nest of a green tree ant
 (*Ecophylla virens*)—which exudes a strong, pungent
 odour of formic acid and is believed by the natives to
 have some therapeutic value. The *kalka* scatters these ants
 over the prolapsed intestine, which my informant declared
 to be effective in causing it to retract.

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It was a matter of surprise to me to find a number of men
 who were in possession of the *kandjurma*, which are the
 stock-in-trade of the *regalk*, admitted to membership of
 the cult, and were even willing to demonstrate to me their
 technique in dealing with a victim.

The natives do not pretend that a man subjected to
 treatment by *kalka* in the manner described is afterwards

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752 honour; sickness overtakes the offender, or the father may
 322 spear him.
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778 New spears, knives, axes, and canoes are sometimes
 784 pronounced sacred and thereby impregnated by tabu.
 411 Custom provides for the use of such articles in inter-tribal
 224 presentations, and any responsible man may prepare them
 431 and paint his horde's totem on them. Nanyan, a youth of
 531 the Gerrkee horde, spent most of his time at Yirrkala, and
 I watched him make a spear and 'declare' it sacred. But the
 tabu could not be completed till he had killed with it, and
 when he speared a kangaroo it automatically became tabu
 to all but the men of his horde. After the meat had been
 eaten the oldest man present completed the ceremony by
 painting totemic symbols on it for Nanyan. He prized his
 spear and used it for a time in hunting; and because it had
 [531] been ceremonially 'painted', the tabu was under control,
 and women and children of his own horde were allowed to
 [562] eat meat killed with it, though on no account could the kill
 be shared with females from other hordes.

[431] Nanyan later presented his spear to a man of the Kumite
 horde who had no totemic or marriage link with the Gerrkee.
 This 'alien' appreciated the courtesy and used the spear
 freely in the hunt, but only the initiated men could eat the
 [562] food, the women and children not being allowed to share in
 the kill, because their horde had no associations with the
 spear's totemic centre. Finally the spear was formally re-
 turned to Nanyan who put it to normal use in procuring
 food for himself and family.

784 On patrol I visited a horde camped among the casuarinas
 226 near Caledon Bay, and in the evening saw the men return
 562 with a canoe loaded with fish. During the unloading I
 noticed that the women and children deliberately kept away
 and ignored the splendid haul, and I was told that the canoe

JUNGLE LORE AND ETIQUETTE

and everything connected with it, including fish, turtle, and other food carried in it, were tabu to women and children. It appeared that two days previously the horde had migrated from the south and had brought a skeleton in the canoe, thereby rendering it tabu to women and children. It was another case of mumbakuta.

Sons and sons-in-law of the deceased person brought the fish ashore and ate them around a totemic well scooped in the sand. The leavings were carefully buried in the 'well' and the customary fire lit over them. The camp then went to the canoe on the beach, lit a fire on the sand, and taking leafy branches held them in the smoke and switched them over the canoe to hunt off the ghost of the dead man. Once the skeleton's influence on the canoe was removed, it was safe to travel in, and food could be eaten from it.

Skeletons are customarily carried in bark parcels and exert far-reaching influences, and 'mall', or ghosts, accompanying such bones must be placated. In an exchange I made with Yama for his father's bones (which I wanted to send to the Sydney Museum), I bartered several items for the complete skeleton in its bark cylinder with his horde's totemic symbols painted on the outside. Unknown to me, there were two powerful influences in the bark parcel, one in the bones and the other in the totemic symbols on the bark itself; for such bones laid a tabu on all they touched, just as they would have done if carried in a canoe, and the bark cylinder, by having a totemic sign painted on it, was sacred. Among the items I had exchanged for the skeleton was an axe, so it was agreed that for ceremonial purposes, this should absorb the tabu from the bones and also from the bark cylinder. Thereafter only the nearest relatives could touch it. To remove the skeleton tabu from the axe, Yama cut open a tree containing a bee's nest. Because of the tabu, only fully initiated men of the horde could eat it; but after the meal, the axe was painted to make it

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784 safe for everyone to use. But the influence of the totem on
 775 the cylinder still remained in the axe, and it could therefore
 765 be used only by near relatives. To overcome this, Yama cut
 778 a canoe, thereby transferring the totemic influences to it.
 [222] The dug-out was 'de-ghosted' in much the same way as if it
 [783] had carried the actual bones; fish caught from it were
 ceremonially eaten, and it was switched with smoking twigs
 to drive off the tabu.

224 'Ghostly' help is freely sought by hunters to assist them
 775 in their search for food. It is generally accepted that if the
 ghost, or mali, of a dead man is harnessed it will assist in the
 hunt by rounding up fish, birds, or animals. A ghost dims
 the eyes of the game so they cannot see clearly, blocks their
 ears so they cannot hear the hunter, and plays such havoc
 with their noses that he is unrecognizable.

224 To obtain the assistance of such a ghost, a hunter must
 775 carry a 'maiwola' or small piece of bone, hair, skin, or
 778 blood from the corpse. Small bones, hair, or other parts of a
 765 body, may be had for the asking when a corpse is being
 [064] dismembered in any normal burial ceremony, and these
 'hunting-charms' are wrapped in bark and hung round the
 neck. The ghost, or mali, lurks near its skeleton and, as in
 the instance of a skeleton carried in a canoe, exerts influence
 over it and all that it touches. But when a hunter carries
 a piece of the body as a charm, he is able to control the
 ghost so that it does his bidding, and when he is hunting the
 ghost follows the charm. If it happens that several men
 have obtained charms from the same corpse, and in different
 parts of the country go hunting at the same time, the ghost
 will serve one and then hurry off to help another. This
 explains why charms are not always effective, for if a hunter
 catches nothing, that is because the ghost is otherwise
 engaged, or is away lurking by the main part of its skeleton,
 which is wrapped in bark and carried by a tribal mother.

775 Any strange event can be readily explained by attributing
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576 your head, and his nose has a ridge like yours. I never noticed before just how much he resembles you, especially when he walks and swings his elbows. He's a splendid lad.'

[431] Naratjin was amusing his small son beside his windbreak in the cool of the day, when Maulin, a man from another horde and moiety, spoke thus to him from the door of his hut. Nomads are extraordinarily susceptible to praise and readily respond to what we would call flattery. But [302] Naratjin was delighted at what he had heard and set [301] about preparing the customary present of food for the flatterer. He painted his son with coloured clay and decorated him with armlets and corslet of string and bird feathers, and took him to visit Maulin. Looking up and seeing the child in all his glory, the flatterer expressed his pleasure before graciously accepting the present. At first I suspected the flatterer of 'singing for his supper', but this somewhat rare form of praise is genuine; it is spontaneously given in public, and Yulengor who may be sitting near by courteously lower their voices whilst the 'toast' is proposed.

576 A carefully preserved etiquette governs the distribution of
224 food. Choice parts of the kill, such as back legs and loins, go
[888] to the old men, before the rest is divided according to the age and importance of those present. Generally the meal proceeds peacefully, and each hunter receives his share with a studied indifference which is under careful control, for the greatest importance is attached to good food.

578 Quarrels can arise from the unfair distribution of food, as
224 when Jaua brought in a kangaroo to share with his brothers
784 and an old man of the Ngaimil horde, and the Ngaimil elder quickly muttered an incantation over it, declaring that he had thereby made it sacred to his Ngaimil totem. By his act, the old man made it possible for him to eat the meat but impossible for the youth who had killed the animal to

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touch it, or for his brothers to do so either. The night was hideous with their quarrelling, and though the brothers attacked the old man with their spear-throwers, he loudly proclaimed the tabu and the youths dared not eat the meat.

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Sexual intercourse is accepted as a natural function, not to be affected by proximity to the family circle or to other families camped a few feet away, nor yet by occasional unseemly interest from the young men's camp. Even in east Arnhem Land, where a strict morality is outwardly enforced, intercourse is little less than promiscuous, and it is not to be wondered at that most youths laughingly admit their *affaires d'amours*, and that women frequently make the initial advance—though secretly for fear of their husbands.

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To prevent irregularities, married men enforce a number of prohibitions, and unmarried and unattached men are segregated in a camp by themselves at a reasonable distance from any family. A woman is not allowed to eat food presented to her husband by a youth, in case he should consider her to be under an obligation to him, and if a youth wishes to share his food with a married brother, he must not go to his camp but must call him over and give it to him.

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In many relationships it is unlawful for a man and woman to greet each other, and when I have asked for a name, I have often been greeted by evasion or silence, simply because no one present was allowed to utter the name. Brothers and sisters may not look at each other when speaking, but talk with averted faces. A man converses freely with his wife, mother, daughter, granddaughter, and niece; but when speaking to other relatives he averts his face, and not being able to call them by name he draws their attention by an ejaculation or by saying: 'I wish to

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BURIAL RITES AND CANNIBALISM

given to relatives, and by accepting them they pledge themselves to avenge the death of their kinsman. Bones are also worn as hunting-charms; the ghost follows the bone and guides the wearer to good hunting. Skeletons carried in canoes or sheltered in huts transfer their ghost to anything they touch, and rarely are they allowed to come into contact with private property. 765 [789] [775]

Tabus are lifted by switching away the ghost with smoking twigs. This common 'muntja' ceremony is performed whenever news of a death reaches a camp, perhaps months after it has occurred, otherwise the roaming, mischievous ghost might haunt them indefinitely. Men are most particular in taking part in the ghost-laying practices, otherwise the ghost would trail them when hunting, and as animals can see these spirits it would not be possible to stalk and spear game. 784 • 775 765 [825]

An accepted etiquette is observed in breaking news of death. With an air of mystery the messenger imparts his information to two or three of the older men, and often it is ten or twelve hours before they divulge the news in open camp. I saw a man bring such news and tell it by signs to a few old men who agreed to keep the secret till they arranged the ghost-placating ceremony, and no one heard about it till the coterie commenced to sing for the unmistakable 'muntja'. Performers then derived great satisfaction from the furore; the rest of the camp ran to inquire about the death and to join in the laying of the ghost. 763 [201]

Dead nomads' names are never repeated, though reference to them can be made by signs or by relationship terms. If the restless ghost heard its old familiar name it would probably lodge in the camp or in the body of the person using it. A nomad with a dead man's name will change it or be referred to under a class-name. A little girl, Milly-milly, had her euphonious name changed to Arrung-giddy-niddy after the death of an older Milly-milly. The child appreciated 551 [775]

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* 773 A goanna was among the many sacred totems in the canoe,
 778 and he fared better than the rest; he swam ashore and hid
 [779] in a lagoon. His lagoon is now an important totem centre,
 and the lesser-spirit, or mali, of the goanna guards it. As in
 many underground springs, the water occasionally bubbles
 up in the lagoon, and this is a sign that the goanna is moving
 [562] below. No women are allowed near the totem, and if yams
 [784] in the vicinity are eaten the results are fatal. Old men who
 remember the Macassars told me that when they attempted
 [648] to make their trepang camps on the beach by the lagoon the
 Yulengor got rid of them by refusing to allow them to use
 the water or to gather firewood.

Restrictions are enforced on firewood in the area, because
 the goanna sent his mali into one of the trees growing by the
 spring. When the Jungkowa followed the goanna ashore,
 they were attracted by the singular beauty of this tree, for as
 [825] well as the goanna-mali they saw a small red parrot in the
 [531] branches. They declared that thereafter the feathers of this
 parrot were to be used in decorating totems of the Dua
 moiety. The tree was pronounced sacred; there are now
 [824] many of them near the lagoon, and the tabu has been
 extended to them all.

* 773 Totems, or 'rungga', floated ashore, and the Jungkowa
 779 hung them in the tree to dry. But when the pandanus palm
 armlets were washed up on the beach, they sprang to life and
 grew of their own accord, and the Jungkowa stripped them
 [824] of their fronds and wove them into the first aboriginal arm-
 lets, dilly-bags, and nganmaras. These articles are in every-
 day use, but because the Jungkowa made them, they are
 also totems, and their story is preserved in the songs and
 ceremonies of the guardian horde.

Two other sacred centres were visited between Blue Mud
 [778] Bay and Cape Arnhem, where the Jungkowa performed
 miracles and taught their children totemic secrets and dances.
 [796] It is the record of these activities, some of them so trivial as

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Stone Age Religion

It is often asked if aborigines are religious and if there is an aboriginal religion. That 'man is a religious animal' and that he is 'incurably religious' are theories that have been widely accepted. Nevertheless it is surprising to discover the extent of aboriginal religious beliefs. Their beliefs are primitive, yet they include the early forms of most well-known religions, and cover to an astonishing degree much of the content in fundamental religion. Religion may be defined in many terms, but a score or more of these widely varying definitions cover the indefinite scope of aboriginal beliefs. Aboriginal religion is one of 'beginnings', and the sum total of his beliefs resolves itself into a deep well of proto-religion in which is found fetishism, tabu, magic, awe, fear, totemism, and prayer to departed human spirits. 771

Fetishism includes the belief that supernatural powers may be harnessed by wearing a charm of hair, skin, blood, or bone taken from the body of a dead man.¹ Wandering spirits are feared, the world is full of them and unexplained happenings are attributed to them.² 778
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Tabus are carefully observed and ceremonial abstinence is dependent on the fear of definite consequences³ whilst, because of its negative reaction, Stone Age men refrain from doing certain things for fear of the evil that will come upon them, as when women abstain from eating men's food and from hunting their game during menstruation.⁴ 784●

¹ Chapter 3, 'Jungle Lore and Etiquette.'

² *Ibid.*

³ Chapter 6, 'From Hand to Mouth.'

⁴ Chapter 3, 'Jungle Lore and Etiquette.'